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became the patron of U Pon Nya, rebelled successfully against his brother Pagan, and there came into being a promise of better times. He built a new capital, Mandalay, with wide streets and pleasant squares, and his wisdom and statesmanship won him the love of his people and the respect of the British. There was again an understanding between the court and the people, and the court became once more the centre of learning, after the lapse of some fifty years. Treaties of friendship between Burma and Britain and the personal affection the king had for Queen Victoria seemed to assure lasting peace to the country.[1] Dreams of a mighty empire, reflected in the heroic interludes, and to some extent in U Kyin U, were abandoned for ever. Peace and contentment were the keynote of the period, and there entered the drama, restored to the forefront by U Pon Nya, an atmosphere of calm, as opposed to that of strife in U Kyin U. Even in *Wizaya* that calmness prevailed. The epoch ended with the execution of U Pon Nya and the rebellion of Myingun, which caused the death of the heir to the throne, the ablest soldiers, the wisest statesmen, and the most learned scholars of the day, leaving the king alone to rule a country wrapped in gloom and a people torn into different factions over the pressing and difficult problem of succession.

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U Pon Nya followed U Kyin U in expressing political opinions in his plays, but he went further and used the drama as a political weapon. In *Paduma* he attacked those ladies of the court who had not shown enough respect or patronage to him, and he was so successful that he became a power in the land. The king, the crown prince, and the chief queen realized this, and they used *The Water-seller* to announce to the people, who were secretly getting ready for a civil war, that the threatened rupture between the brothers, king and prince, happily, would not materialize. Even after its author's death, the play was once specially performed at court, to test opinion with regard to the king's plan to appoint an able prince, who was far removed from the line of succession, as heir to the throne. In the middle of the performance, a senior prince said: 'If father wants to

[1] One of the most prized possessions of King Mindon was a gold watch which Queen Victoria had presented him, and which he always wore. During the Indian Mutiny, in spite of temptation, he remained friendly and even sent help to the British, saying that he would never 'strike a friend in trouble'. Cf. G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, school edition: the ordinary edition gives the history up to 1824 only.

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appoint a lowly prince as crown prince, there will be no objection on our part. But it does not mean that he will become king for, look at *The Water-seller*.' The project was consequently abandoned. This incident illustrates the power of the drama in the politics of the time. *Kawthala* was probably meant to convey to a small section of the people who were against treating with the British and wanting revenge the doctrine that destiny, a worthy foe, and the interests of a country would act against any personal motive of revenge. *Wizaya* was written to win over supporters for Prince Myingun. He had been wild and troublesome as the youthful Wizaya, and the suggestion was that Myingun would bring greatness to Burma if he were but entrusted with the throne. Also, as Myingun had the project of killing both his father and father-in-law, the crown prince, the play was probably meant to spread the doctrine that the destined greatness of a country called for, and justified, sacrifices. The play was so popular that probably Myingun thought wrongly that public opinion had been moulded to give him support when he rebelled. The rebellion failed, and U Pon Nya lost his life, chiefly through the very play which most Burmese critics acclaim as his masterpiece.